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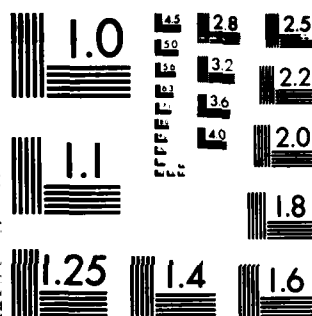
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# AIR COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE

## STUDENT REPORT

BLITZKRIEG MASTERS: GUDERIAN AND PATTON

MAJOR VINCENT J. LANDRY, JR. 85-1550

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## PREFACE

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Blitzkrieg Masters: Guderian and Patton was written to support the Great Warriors portion of the Military History and Theory phase of the Air Command and Staff College Curriculum. Additionally, this material is being submitted to the faculty of the University of Alabama in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a masters degree in military history.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Major Vincent J. Landry, Jr., a native of Houma, Louisiana, graduated from the United States Air Force Academy with a Bachelor of Science degree in Economics in 1971. After graduation from pilot training, Major Landry began his flying career as a KC-135 copilot at Grand Forks AFB, ND. He spent six and a half years at Grand Forks where he served at the squadron level as an aircraft commander and instructor pilot and at the wing level as the Tanker Mission Development Officer and Chief of the Mission Development Branch. In 1979, he was assigned to the Deputy Commandant for Instruction, USAFA, as a military studies instructor. Here he developed the freshman military studies course for the core curriculum and was named as an associate professor by the Dean of Faculty. Major Landry has accrued over 3000 hours of flying time to include over 500 hours of instructor time in the KC-135 and T-41. He is a graduate of Squadron Officers School (in residence) and the Air Command and Staff College (by seminar). He holds a masters degree in Business Administration from the University of North Dakota. Major Landry is currently a course officer at AFSC and is completing a masters degree in Military History from the University of Alabama.



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## Chapter One

### INTRODUCTION

This project compares two great military leaders of World War II, Heinz W. Guderian and George S. Patton, Jr. Its purpose is to relate their strategies and tactics to the Air Command and Staff College strategy process model through an examination of their respective backgrounds and major World War II campaigns. Additionally, the project examines their application of the Principles of War as defined in AFM 1-1.

The significance of examining these two World War II warriors lies in the simple fact they both were early and strong proponents of armored warfare. They both put the theories of J. F. C. Fuller into practical application and they both fought their major campaigns in the same war. While they never met in battle, they did fight their most successful battles over virtually the same territory in western Europe.

This study assumes that the reader is familiar with both the strategy process model and the Principles of War. Also he or she can develop a greater appreciation for the accomplishments of each of the warriors presented and improve their understanding of the strategy process model and the Principles of War.

## Chapter Two

### GUDERIAN, HIS BACKGROUND AND BATTLES

By May 20, Guderian's forward units were in Amiens and Abbeville; they had gone farther in 10 days than the Kaiser's World War I armies had been able to get in four years. . . . His calculated risk had produced one of those decisive events that change the course of wars and empires.(20:120)

This chapter chronicles the major contributions of Heinz W. Guderian to modern warfare. It examines the early influences on Guderian, his influence on Panzer development and German battle strategy, his activities as a battlefield commander, and finally his actions as Inspector General of Armored Troops and as Chief of the German General Staff. It is a picture of a professional soldier whose development and application of mobility changed the tactics of war.(9:12)

As a young boy, his personal future was very certain. His father, Friedrich, an army officer whom he regarded as a "model of soldierly and human virtue," commanded the 10th Hannoverian Jager(light infantry) Battalion.(9:18) Following in his father's footsteps, Heinz was destined to become a soldier. He was commissioned a lieutenant in his father's battalion in early 1907. Since Jager battalions were designed for highly mobile offensive action, Guderian learned early about the effectiveness

of such units, lessons he would apply so successfully later in his career.

As a soldier Guderian learned quickly, and continually sought to broaden his professional experience. In 1912, he chose a course of study in signal communications over one in machine guns because his father saw a future in signaling, primarily because of the new wireless radios. In 1913, Heinz became the youngest officer selected as a student for the War Academy after passing the entrance exams on his first attempt, but World War I cut short Guderian's assignment to the War Academy.(12:6-7)

Guderian spent the first part of the war in charge of a signal detachment. He felt that the wireless was not used to its full potential like much of the other technology (tanks and airplanes) developed during the war. In 1916, as an intelligence officer, he immediately recognized the value of aerial reconnaissance and flew several times as an observer. Thus, he saw trench warfare and the application of brute force at the exclusion of mobility.(12:16) Major J. F. C. Fuller's victory at Cambrai using tanks left its impression on Guderian. He would later write, "... the tank force provided the real dynamic punch (Stosskraft) of the Entente armies since they broke through the Siegfried (Hindenburg) Line, regarded as impenetrable at Cambrai, in one morning."(15:18) Another lesson Guderian took from World War I was General Hans von Seeckt's

successful mobile warfare that achieved deep penetrations on the Russian front. Seeckt used calvary to exploit breaks made by massed infantry.(12:119) When the war ended, Guderian, under Seeckt, immersed himself in restoring order to the chaos of the German Army.

After the war, Guderian held several positions in the army. He was a member of the General Staff (OKH) until 1920 when he was given command of his father's 10th Jager Battalion. The position, though, in which he would have a major influence on armor development was as Inspectorate of Transport Troops. (12:37) During this time he studied and analyzed every phase of transportation and mobility. He wrote several articles and lectured at the Military Transport School. He became Germany's chief proponent of Fuller's basic concept.

In the simplest terms Fuller envisaged armored mechanized armies which had the inherent capability, supported by aircraft and artillery, to breach a fortified line and then achieve deep penetration of enemy territory, mopping up the forward artillery zones, knocking out headquarters, capturing supply dumps, cutting communications and generally causing such damage and confusion amid the least well defended parts of the enemy hinterland that a total collapse of morale, command and control and resistance can be expected.(12:41)

Being one who studied armored warfare extensively, Guderian became Germany's expert on it.(9:20)

Guderian did more than study. He planned, executed and observed exercises of the Motorized Battalions which used real

ward armored transports and motorcycles. He traveled to Sweden to inspect and drive one of the German tanks that was being developed. Through all this he had become convinced of one thing.

In this year, 1929, I became convinced that tanks working on their own or in conjunction with infantry could never achieve decisive importance. . . . It would be wrong to include tanks in infantry divisions; what was needed were armored divisions which would include all the supporting arms needed to allow tanks to fight with full effect.(9:24)

Guderian's main aim now was to convince the General Staff that armored troops were a decisive weapon and needed to be operationally developed into Panzer Divisions and Corps.(9:25) He met much resistance to these innovative ideas, particularly from the Inspectorate of the Cavalry, who correctly felt threatened by them. This resistance was greatly reduced in 1933 by one specific event.

In 1933, a meeting was held by the Army Ordnance Office to demonstrate weapon development to the new chancellor, Adolph Hitler. Guderian was allotted 30 minutes to demonstrate his position on motorized troops. He showed Hitler a platoon of motorcycles, one of anti-tank, one of light and one of heavy armored reconnaissance cars, and one of the recently acquired experimental Panzers. Hitler was so impressed by the speed and precision of the units he said, "That's what I need! That's what I must have!"(9:30) Resistance to Guderian's concept of armor-

### Timing and Tempo

Timing and Tempo is the principle of executing military operations at a point in time and at a rate which optimizes the use of friendly forces and which inhibits or denies the effectiveness of enemy forces. The purpose is to dominate the action, remain unpredictable, and create uncertainty in the mind of the enemy.(5:2-8)

The blitzkrieg warfare that Guderian developed used mass, economy of force, maneuver, and timing and tempo as the pillars of its foundation.(8:64) Mass was achieved by Guderian's insistence that armored forces be employed in the battle as a unit instead of dispersing them as infantry support weapons. Economy of force was the key when Guderian crossed the Meuse River. A few dive bombers, not massed artillery, was used to keep the French pinned down while Panzers crossed.(4:220) By enveloping points of stiff resistance and isolating them, to be cleared by following infantry forces, Guderian highlighted his ability to maneuver.(4:237) As for his feel for timing and tempo, he clearly demonstrated this in his failure to halt during the French campaign. While his superiors worried about his flanks, he correctly assessed his ability to keep the enemy forces disorganized by constant attack.(4:231)

### Unity of Command

Unity of command is the principle of vesting appropriate authority and responsibility in a single commander to effect unity of effort in carrying out an assigned task. . . it is best achieved by giving a single commander full authority.(5:2-8)

## Security

Security is taking continuous, positive measures to prevent surprise and preserve freedom of action. Security involves active and passive defensive measures and the denial of useful information to the enemy.(5:2-6)

Guderian showed a potential weakness in this area. He was in the habit of transmitting orders via unsecured radios during his operations which could have allowed his plans to be compromised. Additionally, on two occasions, his advance was halted by his superiors because they felt he had left his flanks unprotected. Only the fact that the enemy made weak, unorganized attacks on his flanks saved him from disaster.(10:65-71)

## Mass

Concentrated firepower can overwhelm enemy defenses and secure an objective at the right time and place. . . . This requires a balance between mass and economy of force, but the paramount consideration for the commanders must always be the objective.(5:2-7)

## Economy of Force

Concurrently, using economy of force permits a commander to execute attack with appropriate mass at the critical time and place without wasting resources on secondary objectives. War will always involve the determination of priorities.(5:2-7)

## Maneuver

Maneuver is the movement of friendly forces in relation to enemy forces. Commanders seek to maneuver their strengths selectively against an enemy's weakness while avoiding engagements with forces of superior strength.(5:2-8)



the enemy and a smaller portion to mop up extraneous objectives set by Hitler.(12:123)

#### Offensive

Unless offensive action is initiated, military victory is seldom possible. The offensive enables commanders to select priorities of attack, as well as the time, place, and weaponry necessary to achieve objectives.  
(5:2-6)

Guderian's appreciation of offensive operations is characterized by his drive through France. It is highlighted by a discussion he had with Hitler. Guderian was presenting his portion of the French invasion at a group commanders conference. Hitler asked what Guderian planned to do once he had crossed the Meuse River. Guderian replied, "Unless I receive orders to the contrary, I intend on the next day to continue my advance westward." Hitler asked no more questions, it was clear how Guderian intended to fight.(9:92)

#### Surprise

Surprise is the attack of an enemy at a time, place and manner for which the enemy is neither prepared nor expecting an attack. The principle of surprise is achieved when an enemy is unable to react effectively to an attack.(5:2-6)

Guderian demonstrated his understanding of this principle when he insisted the Panzer divisions lead the attack through the Ardennes. The French were totally unprepared for this. He crossed the Meuse two days before his own general staff thought he could. The French were unable to stop his advance.(12:98)

ment divisions by half to achieve this. The armor divisions as designed by Guderian no longer existed.

The failure to achieve success in Russia did not result from the failure of blitzkrieg as envisioned by Guderian. The failure was Hitler's inability to assimilate the military and battlefield strategy of Guderian and correctly apply them. It is ironic Guderian's early success eventually led to Germany's collapse.

### PRINCIPLES OF WAR

Guderian excelled in the German army as a battlefield commander. The strategies and tactics he employed in Poland, France and Russia demonstrated a great appreciation for the Principles of War. The following discusses how well Guderian applied those principles:

#### Objective

The objective defines what the military action intends to accomplish and normally describes the nature and scope of an operation. . . . The ultimate military objective of war is to neutralize or destroy the enemy's armed force and his will to fight.(5:2-5)

During Guderian's drive from the French coast of the English Channel to Switzerland, he was bombarded with vacillating orders from the top. Hitler wanted him to capture the French armament industry despite the fact that the French troops were retreating. Guderian saw the objective as destroying the enemy's forces. He used the main portion of his force to pursue

Thus, by the time Hitler came to power in January 1933 he was clear in general terms what he wanted - an army which would be highly mobile and capable of a quick devastating strike at the enemy. As he said, "I shall never start a war without a certainty that a demoralized enemy will succumb to a quick single gigantic stroke." (15:77)

Guderian's development of armored forces and his employment of those forces were clearly linked to Hitler's grand strategy. Guderian's demonstration of his idea of armored warfare at Kummersdorf in 1933 was what Hitler needed. By employment of blitzkrieg in the West, Guderian provided Hitler with the quick victory he sought. This conformed to the reality of the need for Germany to achieve a swift victory because she was not mobilized for a prolonged war. Given the fact Hitler planned to eventually attack Russia, Guderian's armored warfare was future oriented. It allowed the use of minimum forces in the conquest of the West and at the same time kept most of these forces in tact for the invasion of Russia.

During the Russian campaign, the same principles of strategy were violated. Because of the success of blitzkrieg in the West, it was unrealistically applied in a strategy for a victory in the East. Hitler believed his armored forces would achieve a quick victory, so they were not prepared for an early Russian winter which came in September 1941. Additionally, to meet the multiple objectives of his Russian campaign, Hitler doubled the number of armored divisions. Since he had not mobilized Germany, he simply cut the number of Panzers in the cur-

## Chapter Three

### GUDERIAN, AN ANALYSIS

A dead enemy does not profit a victor, but a live one, willing to do his bidding, may be a stepping-stone to greater success.(14:53)

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze Guderian's military strategy to determine his part in the strategy process model as it applies to Hitler's vision of Germany as the Third Reich. Additionally, it examines how Guderian applied the Principles of War, as discussed in AFM 1-1. The first portion deals with the strategy process model and the second portion discusses the principles.

### THE STRATEGY PROCESS

As he stated in Mein Kampf, Hitler's ultimate national objective was the defeat of Russia and the annexation of her territory. Hitler realized Western Europe would have to be defeated quickly and its people and industry put to use. He knew this could be achieved through mobilized warfare.(15:76)

major impact in the East by masterminding the defense around Warsaw that halted the Russian offensive there for a time. Hitler's insistence on holding firm in the East cost Germany enormous and unnecessary losses. Guderian fought openly and often about this with Hitler, and Hitler eventually asked him to take sick leave.(12:203)

Despite Guderian's inability to achieve any large degree of success in his final office in the German Army, his career is highlighted with great achievements. As a young officer he demonstrated professional qualities far above his experience. In the Inspectorate of Transport Troops, he revolutionized the concept of mobile warfare. As a battlefield commander, he proved his theories through personal application. His failure to achieve his objectives as the OKH Chief of Staff was a result of his inability to deal effectively with Hitler. Guderian suffered the same failure all previous Chiefs of Staff experienced. Macksey's book, Guderian: Creator of the Blitz-Krieg, inadequately describes the contribution to and influence on the German Army of this remarkable soldier.

ious positions. It was not until February of 1943 that these efforts were successful. By this time the outlook for Germany was in grave doubt. Hitler allowed Guderian to design his own appointment--Inspector General of Armored Troops. Guderian was given a degree of status and control of these forces that placed them on equal status with the SS and Luftwaffe. He had finally achieved what he had sought since 1938, a self-sufficient armored combat force within the Wehrmacht.(12:168)

This achievement was little consolation to Guderian. Before him was the task of retraining, reorganizing, resupplying and refitting the German Panzer forces. This was all necessary for Germany to regain the initiative. He, teamed with men like Albert Speers, accomplished much in rearming the Panzer forces. His major problem was his frustration with Hitler's taking operational command of the forces and failing to exercise it properly.(9:31) Others who felt this same frustration took action.

While it is unclear to what degree Guderian was involved in the plot to assassinate Hitler, it is certain he was aware of it, if not of the actual details.(12:185-6) Guderian did emerge from the debacle as the acting Chief of Staff of the OKH.(12:186) If the tasks Guderian had as Inspector General (a job which he retained) were great, his job now took on gargantuan proportions.

Guderian had little success in his duties. He did have a

spearhead the Central Group's drive to Moscow.

Initially, Guderian achieved enormous success as did the whole of the German Army. But it became very apparent this would be a much more difficult campaign than France for several reasons. First, Guderian's immediate commander, General von Kluge, pushed Guderian to employ his forces contrary to the tactics Guderian had proven in France. Second, the distances involved were half again greater than in France. Inadequate rail transport compounded this problem. An early Russian winter presented another problem to an army unprepared for winter operations. Lastly, the Russian Army proved far superior in numbers and ability than the Germans had estimated.(8:120-125) All these factors combined to put Guderian and most of the German Army in an extremely difficult position by December 1941.

Faced with what he felt was inadequate reserves and provisions, Guderian began to withdraw his forces from their forward positions in December. This was to reduce the pressure put on them by Russian offensives. Kluge ordered him to halt his retreat and Guderian asked to be relieved of command. Kluge, with Hitler's approval, subsequently fired him.(12:159-160) It is ironic that Guderian had resigned once before, for failing to halt during his continued advance in France. This was his last operational command but not the end of his service to Germany.

Guderian had many supporters in high levels of command and several attempts were made to have Hitler reinstate him in var-

cut the main arteries of the opposing army far back behind its front.(10:65-71)

Despite his success, the sight at Dunkirk also provided Guderian with frustration. Guderian wanted to capture the fleeing British Army but Hitler refused to allow Guderian to go further and eventually the British escaped. Different reasons for Hitler's decision are given; at the time Guderian could but follow orders. While the issue for France had all but been decided, Guderian would still have to drive through to Switzerland to conquer what remained of the French Army.(12:123) Guderian succeeded here as well as during the initial phase of the Battle for France. The campaign that followed in the East had different results.

Many who studied World War II claim that the invasion of Russia had been Hitler's main objective all along. Others argue that with France secure and Britain posing little threat, Hitler was so intoxicated by his victory that he naturally turned to the defeat of the communists which he hated and feared above all others.(12:126) The OKH, under the dominating influence of Hitler, produced a diverse set of economic and territorial objectives. Guderian felt the capture of Moscow was a primary political objective necessary to defeat Stalin.(12:130) Despite his arguments against the dilution of Germany's forces, the multiple objectives of conquering Leningrad, Moscow and Kiev were established. Guderian's Second Panzer Group was to



(9:92) Guderian seized this opportunity and later wrote in his book Panzer Leader,

I never received any further orders as to what to do once the bridgehead over the Meuse was captured. All my decisions, until I reached the Atlantic seaboard at Abbeville, were taken by me and me alone. The Supreme Command's influence on my actions was merely restrictive throughout.(9:92)

Armed with his belief in the superiority of massed armored forces, Guderian was ready to enter France.

During the offensive in France, Guderian stunned Hitler and the OKH with his success. He crossed the Meuse on the fifth day with only the support of aircraft which performed as his artillery. His major problem was the OKH's and Hitler's orders to halt his drive. At one point, he resigned his command because of these orders. He was quickly returned to command and given permission to continue until he met "strong resistance." The primary concern of Hitler and the OKH was Guderian's exposed flanks. Guderian did not ignore this problem. He correctly perceived the inability of either the retreating British on his right or the disarrayed French on his left to mount an effective counteroffensive. By the time the French were ready to mount such a counteroffensive, Guderian's flanks had been secured by infantry divisions. As he watched the helpless British Expeditionary Forces flee the port at Dunkirk, Guderian knew he had proven his idea. Armored forces were best suited for deep independent strategic penetration--a long range tank drive to

sidered feasible by Guderian." (13:109) Manstein's plan was initially rejected by the General Staff but later they accepted it at Hitler's insistence.

With the plan decided, Guderian gave his full attention to making it work. The Manstein plan gave Guderian an excellent opportunity to display his generalship and to prove the value of Panzer forces once and for all. Manstein later wrote, "Ultimately, it was his (Guderian's) elan which inspired our tanks on their dash round the backs of the enemy to the channel coast." (13:109) Guderian still faced some difficulties with the OKH in the approach he wanted to take with the offensive thrust. He proposed to establish a bridgehead and then cross the Meuse River near Sedan by the fifth day of the offensive. The Chief of the German General Staff, Halder, said his idea was "senseless" and that Guderian would have to wait for infantry forces to catch up. Guderian would not be able to execute a crossing until the tenth day. (12:106) The controversy was settled in a very indirect manner.

An army group commanders conference was held which was attended by Hitler. Each commander presented his portion of the offensive to Hitler. Guderian presented his portion, including his intention to cross the Meuse on the fifth day. Hitler only asked him what he would do after crossing. Guderian replied, "Unless I receive orders to the contrary, I intend on the next day to continue my advance westward." Hitler made no comment.

than just develop these forces; by September 1939 he had been promoted to Lieutenant General and was appointed Commanding General of the XIX Army Corps.(9:46)

By September, Hitler had also been busy. He had militarized the Rhineland, incorporated Austria, the Sudetenland and Czechoslovakia into the Reich and prepared the invasion of Poland. By all accounts, including Guderian's, Poland was not a significant test of blitzkrieg warfare. However, the fact remains that within eight days Guderian's forces were outside of Warsaw.(9:75) Even though the invasion of Poland was very successful, Guderian learned valuable lessons. The Panzer Divisions were somewhat reorganized and strengthened. Guderian, along with many other army officers, was awarded the Knight's Cross.

Planning for the campaign in the West began in earnest following the Polish victory. The Army High Command intended to use the "Schlieffen Plan" of 1914. General Erich von Manstein wanted to include a strong tank thrust through the Ardennes Forest. He saw the Ardennes area as a weak hinge in the French defenses. The objective of his plan was to split the defending French forces. To determine its feasibility, Manstein called Guderian in to study the Ardennes plan. Manstein was thrilled by the armor expert's opinion. He wrote, "For me, of course, it was a great relief to know that my idea of pushing large numbers of tanks through such difficult country as the Ardennes was con-

ed force dropped considerably thereafter.

Because of Hitler's enthusiastic reception of Guderian's ideas, the process of creating an armored force now received support from the German General Staff. Guderian still had to convince his superiors that the best way to use armor was on its own, not simply supporting infantry divisions. He published his book Achtung! Panzer! in an effort to increase support. In the fall of 1937, he proved the Panzer Division could be employed as a unit during a large army maneuver held for Hitler. (9:46)

As a recognized armor expert and from his position in the Inspectorate, Guderian had a major impact on the development and employment of German armored forces. When questioned by Liddell Hart, the German General, Toma, attributes the tremendous early breakthroughs the German armored forces achieved in World War II to five main reasons:

1. The concentration of all forces on the point of penetration in cooperation with bombers.
2. Exploiting the success of this movement on the roads during the night - as a result, we often achieved success by surprise deep in, and behind, the enemy's front.
3. Insufficient anti-tank defense on the enemy's part, and our own superiority in the air.
4. The fact that the armored division itself carried enough petrol for 150-200 kilometers . . .
5. Carrying rations sufficient for three days in the tanks, for three more days in regimental supply columns, . . . (11:95-96)

These principles were a direct result of Guderian's influence on armored forces development. Guderian would be able to do more

Guderian was a commander who led his armies from the front. His frequent trips to the front were generally not mistaken by his subordinate commanders as interference. They realized that his main purpose was to dovetail their activities with flanking formations.(12:120)

#### Simplicity

To achieve a unity of effort toward a common goal, guidance must be quick, clear and concise- it must have simplicity. Simplicity promotes understanding, reduces confusion, and permits ease of execution in the intense and uncertain environment of combat.  
(5:2-8)

Guderian's operations both in France and Russia showed the basic simplicity of blitzkrieg. Advance with armor, bypass areas of stiff resistance and disorganize and destroy the enemy.

#### Logistics

Logistics is the principle of sustaining both man and machine in combat by obtaining, moving and maintaining warfighting potential. . . . Logistics can limit the extent of an operation or permit the attainment of objectives.(5:2-9)

Guderian was keenly aware of logistic considerations. Armored divisions were designed to carry petrol for advances of 150-200 kilometers with rations for three days in the Panzers and another three days in regimental supply columns.(11:95-96)

#### Cohesion

Cohesion is the principle of establishing and maintaining the warfighting spirit and capability of a force to win. Cohesion is the cement that holds a unit together through the trials of combat and is critical to the fighting effectiveness of a force.  
(5:2-9)

Cohesion is another term for morale. Guderian understood morale is achieved when soldiers see the results of their efforts. One of the companies Guderian commanded wrote a poem to him that attests to Guderian's ability to inspire cohesion.

It is you, Hauptman Guderian  
Who not merely saw an instrument in man,  
Who taught us the 'why' of such unavoidable toil.  
If things were sometimes severe, then duty is harsh!  
What fears the Warrior!  
The company is grateful.(12:36)

In summary, the analysis of Guderian reveals a warrior in total accord with his environment. Though he was the architect of blitzkrieg warfare, he never achieved independent command. His genius gave Hitler the tool to defeat the western allies but Hitler was unable to use this tool to its full advantage, particularly in Russia. Guderian's battle exploits and theories reflect a high degree of comprehension and successful application of the Principles of War.

## Chapter Four

### PATTON, HIS BACKGROUND AND BATTLES

The lodestar of Patton's life in particular had always been the dream that he would one day command a great army which winning spectacular victory after victory by surprise and speed would enshrine forever the glory of the American arms and his own name.(7:84)

This chapter is a brief look at the background and battles of General George S. Patton, Jr. It tells of his early life and exploits prior to World War II and then examines Patton's participation in the major campaigns of World War II. North Africa, Sicily, his drive through France and defeat of Germany serve to demonstrate the greatness of this warrior(a warrior was all Patton ever wanted to be).

George S. Patton, Jr., was born on a large ranch near Pasadena, California in 1885. Patton's family was very wealthy, his father was a lawyer and rancher who had a great deal of respect for the military profession and was himself a graduate of Virginia Military Institute. Patton's family history was steeped in the military, as his grandfather and seven great-uncles served as officers in the Confederate Army during the American Civil War; George Jr. and his father had even visited several of the battlefields of that war as he was growing up.

This proud heritage and his voracious appetite for adventure novels led Patton to follow his ancestors in glory to other battlefields.

Patton began his military career when he entered Virginia Military Institute in 1903, and a year later he entered West Point. In 1909, he graduated and was commissioned a lieutenant in the cavalry. The years he spent in the cavalry shaped his belief in speed and mobility, two principles that he would employ later in armored warfare on the European continent. Longing for action, Patton persuaded General John Pershing to take him along to Mexico to chase Pancho Villa in 1916. He so impressed Pershing that Pershing later insisted Patton be his aide-de-camp when Pershing commanded the American Expeditionary Force in Europe during World War I. It was here Patton would be introduced to the new weapons of warfare.(7:2-8)

Patton developed his expertise in armored warfare as a result of his experiences in World War I. Pershing understood Patton's desire to enter combat and placed him in command of the first two American tank battalions. Patton had a ringside seat at the Battle of Cambrai, the first use of tanks in warfare. It convinced him that tanks, operating in conjunction with aircraft, infantry and artillery, could restore mobility to the battlefield.(7:10) He also commanded this brigade of tanks at St Mihiel, where he learned several lessons concerning communications and logistics as they applied to tanks.(7:16) He emer-



ged from World War I as America's premier expert on armored warfare.

After the war, Patton's military experiences were less glamorous, and he met different degrees of success. In the area of military education, Patton had few peers as he graduated with honors from both Command and General Staff College and the Army War College.(7:23) However, he did not have as much success with promoting the cause of armored warfare. He assisted Walter Christie in developing one of the most advanced tanks of the time, but Patton could not interest the Ordnance Department in it. When the Tank School was placed under the Chief of Infantry, Patton returned to the cavalry. He continued to study the writings of Fuller and Liddell Hart and even wrote a few articles of his own for the Cavalry Journal(now Armor).(7:26) At the age of 53, Col Patton was preparing to retire from the Army, but world events soon changed his plans, for in May 1940, the German breakthrough at Sedan marked the true beginning of combat in World War II. During this war, Patton would become one of the most famous combat leaders in modern times.

It was 1943 before American troops saw action in this war. Patton played a major role in preparing armored forces for that action. First, he commanded the Second Armored Division at Fort Benning, Georgia. He then commanded the I Armored Corps during its desert training in California. All the while he knew that armored forces and the morale and fighting spirit of US troops

would be the deciding factor in a victory over the Axis powers.  
(18:79-80)

American troops first experienced combat in North Africa. During Operation "Torch," Major General Patton had the task of capturing Casablanca during the invasion of Morocco.(7:240) The African landings were on a scale never before attempted.(18:98) There was a high degree of risk because of that and because of the uncertainty of the Vichy French reaction.(9:316-317) The operation was a success, but Patton did not have long to enjoy the victory, for his talents were needed elsewhere in Africa.

After a severe defeat of the US II Corps at Kasserine Pass, Patton was sent to Tunisia to take command. The effect Patton had on the Corps is best described by Harry H. Semmes in his book, Portrait of Patton.

. . . the bringing together of American troops and a real American leader, willing to be seen and felt at the very front, was the true story of the transformation that accompanied the arrival of General Patton in Tunisia.

The Tunisia campaign ended as a great success for the Allied forces. General Omar Bradley would finish the campaign for Patton, who was called back to Morocco to plan the invasion of Sicily.(17:151)

Patton's plan for taking Sicily was based on capturing Palermo on the north of the island and then driving east to Messina to cut the escape of the Axis forces. The final plan for Operation "Husky" rejected his ideas for the invasion.

Patton's Seventh Army was given the responsibility of protecting the flanks of General Montgomery's British Eighth Army. Eventually, what Patton planned came to pass as the Seventh Army took Palermo and then drove to Messina just ahead of the British. Unfortunately, the bulk of the German forces had escaped. (7:83-102). Patton's success, however, was overshadowed by an infamous incident.

The next few months were a low point for Patton. In Sicily he slapped a corporal, and this incident came close to ending his combat career. Despite pressure from much of the US press, General Eisenhower supported Patton but removed him from command. Patton proved valuable even without a command. A phony Army was established under Patton with the intent to deceive the Germans that the invasion of France would come at Calais. The deception worked and it was continued, for a time, even after Patton took command of the Third Army after the D-Day invasion. (7:110-118)

Patton remained behind in England during Operation "Overlord" but was a key player in the drive from the Normandy beachhead through France. He knew in January 1944 that he would be the commander of the Third Army once it became operational in Europe. He formed an exceptionally efficient staff from veterans who served under him in North Africa and Sicily. (7:120-121) He had his staff develop the most comprehensive and spectacular mobile war room of all the Allied armies. He used it and its

maps to keep himself and his staff fully aware of the status of the European theater. The maps showed the order of battle down to division level for both Allied and German forces. Patton prepared himself for operations in Europe by studying Wellington's campaigns as well as all six volumes of Freeman's History of the Norman Conquest.(16:89) When he got the go ahead, he and his staff were ready to exploit the breakout developed by Bradley.(7:123-127)

On 1 August 1944, the Third Army became operational under Patton and it began to change the map of France, beginning at the Avranches Gap.(6: map 54) Patton's objective was to clear the Brittany peninsula and occupy its ports for logistics support for the Allied drive through France. At the beginning of the breakout, Patton ordered part of his force to drive south and then east in an enveloping maneuver. The purpose was to attempt to surround German Army Group B.(7:143) By 7 August, the only German forces in Brittany were surrounded in three ports and Brittany became a secondary operation. Eisenhower and Bradley changed plans to support Patton's enveloping maneuver and by 13 August, Patton's Army was ready to close a noose around Group B.(16:87) At this point, Bradley ordered Patton to halt his northward advance because Bradley feared the confusion of Allied forces converging head on during a combat drive. General von Kluge, the commander of Army Group B, convinced Hitler that withdrawal was the only hope for Army Group B, and he suc-

ceeded in escaping with a large portion of his army from the salient.(16:101)

Since Patton's efforts to annihilate the Germany Army were frustrated, he began to drive east towards Paris. The Third Army captured Orleans on 15 August and on 16 August it halted 37 miles from Paris to allow logistic support to catch up to its rapid pace. Despite the strain on the supply system, Bradley ordered Patton to continue eastward and to drive past Paris. The Third Army made its mark in the history books by advancing further and faster than any other army in history.(16:106-112) However, Patton's Army would soon be slowed down by the constraints of the logistics system.

Lack of gasoline supplies caused Patton to halt more than once as Bradley ordered him eastward along a line from Paris towards Metz and Nancy. Eisenhower's attention had turned to operations north of Third Army where he aimed to liberate ports he felt vital to logistic support. He again cut Patton's gasoline supplies temporarily. After a crucial period of standstill, Patton managed to continue his drive using some captured supplies and some procured by questionable means though the delay allowed the Germans to regroup and solidify their defenses along the Moselle River between Metz and Nancy. The Third Army suffered its heaviest casualties of the war crossing the river. Once logistic support was restored, Patton's Army did cross the river on 25 September, but his logistical problems continued to

cause difficulties.(7:189-206)

Patton wrote,"The period from September 25 to November 7, was a difficult one for the Third Army."(16:134) Eisenhower felt the logistics system was on the verge of collapse, and it could not support both Montgomery's and Bradley's operations. Eisenhower decided to support Montgomery's effort to free the port of Antwerp which should have the effect of relieving the logistics problem.(7:206) Despite his disagreement, Patton set about to maintain the "offensive spirit of the troops." He did this by attacking at various points when his supplies permitted. At the same time, he maintained his defensive positions and enlarged the bridgehead on the Moselle River.(16:206) The morale and capability of Third Army was high when it resumed the offensive in November 1944.(7:211) Despite continually deteriorating weather, by 5 December, Patton's Army had captured the Lorraine valley and was on the verge of entering Germany.(16:157-185)

On 16 December 1944, German forces began the offensive known as the "Battle of the Bulge," an operation which caught almost all of the Allied commanders completely unprepared. As mentioned earlier, Patton had his staff monitor the situation map for the entire European front. Four days prior to the German offensive, Col Koch, Patton's Chief of Intelligence, noted the massing of German forces near the Ardennes forest and recognized its significance. Patton had his staff prepare plans

to disengage the Third Army from current operations and be ready to attack north if assistance there was required. Eisenhower called a commander's conference on 19 December. He asked for options to counter the critical situation that the Allies faced. Patton presented his plan which was implemented immediately. Third Army relieved the 101st Airborne Division on 26 December and held the town of Bastogne in the middle of the bulge. Patton turned a near disaster for the Allies into a decisive German defeat.(7:212-233)

Even after the Ardennes defeat, the Germans had 85 divisions west of the Rhine River and these would have to be destroyed to achieve unconditional surrender. Official policy was the main battle effort was to be north of the Ruhr Valley. This gave the lion's share of the logistic support to the British. Patton only was allowed to conduct an "aggressive defense". (7:235-236) Patton's operations put him in a position that enabled his Third Army to capture the western defensive German line. Along with the US Seventh Army on its southern flank, Patton's Third Army overran and destroyed the German First and Seventh Armies. This was known as the "Rhineland Campaign" and was described as the most brilliant and audacious of the war. Additionally, it was heralded as one of the most successful and complete military operations in recorded history.(7:234-243)

At the end of the Rhineland Campaign, the smell of victory was in the air. On 23 March 1945, elements of the Third Army

crossed the Rhine 24 hours ahead of the British. The war was not over for the Third Army, but the German Army was all but annihilated. There were no more major actions for Patton's Third Army, and what fighting it did was in the nature of pursuit of the defeated German Army. The Rhineland Campaign was Patton's last major battle.(7:244-245)

Several things besides the war ended for Patton in 1945. Towards the end of the war, Patton was temporarily promoted to four-star rank. After the war ended, he assumed the duties of the military governor of Bavaria. In December 1945, he was killed in an automobile accident in Germany. Patton received tribute and honors from all the Allies and the Germans as well. (2:411)

Patton's background and military career can best be described as that of a true soldier. Boyhood influences helped to shape his desire to be nothing else. Early in his military career he demonstrated the desire and ability to command. He was keenly aware of military tradition and history, but he was not stifled by inertia. He recognized at once the ability of the tank to restore mobility to the battlefield. His genius for military operations was called on in almost every European theater the US fought in during World War II. He never achieved independent command, but few dispute he had one of the greatest military minds in history.



## Chapter Five

### PATTON, AN ANALYSIS

This seems to me to be the record of a man who was devoted to war. . . . As for his great qualities as a soldier, they appear in the facts that he was fond of adventure, ready to lead an attack on the enemy by day or by night, and that when he was in awkward position, he kept his head, as everyone agrees who was with him anywhere. It is said that he had all the qualities of leadership which a man of his sort could have.

- Xenophon of Clearchus the Spartan,  
his first general, ca. 360 B.C.(7:ix-x)

The purpose of this portion of the study is to analyze Patton to determine his part in the strategy process model as it applies to the US in regards to World War II. Additionally, it examines how well Patton applied the Principles of War as defined by AFM 1-1. The first portion deals with the strategy process model and the second with the Principles. In order to relate the model, the national objective of the US in World War II must be determined.

### THE STRATEGY PROCESS

The Casablanca Conference of January 1943 ended with a clear statement of the national objective of the US and its military strategy for World War II. At this meeting between President Franklin Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston

Churchill, it was determined that the unconditional surrender of Germany was the national objective of not only the US but of all the Allied powers. It would be accomplished through a military strategy of first landing on Sicily and defeating Italy and then landing on the continent of Europe in France and destroying the German Army in a drive to Germany.(1:751) Patton understood the objective and the means to obtain it very clearly.

While Patton has been accused of not understanding the politics of the Allies, he did show a definite understanding of the military strategy for achieving the national objective. His plan for the landing on Sicily was based on capturing and destroying some of the premier divisions of the German Army stationed there.(18:152) Again in France, as soon as he was given a command, Patton began operations designed to encircle and destroy a major portion of the German Army. Once the Avranches Gap was opened, he maneuvered around German Army Group B.(10:143) His greatest effort to crush German armies came during the Rhineland Campaign. In this operation, Patton's Third Army and the US Seventh Army overran and destroyed Germany's First and Seventh Armies.(7:240-243) Patton's military strategy was fully in accord with the US's national objective for the unconditional surrender of Germany.

Patton's military and battlefield strategy of annihilation of the German Army through his own version of blitzkrieg reflect the major principles of the strategy process. First, his deter-

mination to engage and defeat the enemy was directly linked to the national objective. If Germany was going to surrender unconditionally, her armies would have to be defeated decisively. Patton also understood he had the vast industrial resources of the US at his disposal to wear down the German Army. He chose to employ the fast paced blitzkrieg because he understood the reality that unless the Germans were kept on the move during their retreat, they would dig in, reorganize and thus inflict heavy casualties on his forces. This approach also took future into consideration, since he understood the American public support would probably decline if the war was prolonged. Patton's approach and subsequent victories also demonstrated his understanding of the basic nature of war.

#### PRINCIPLES OF WAR

Patton's strategies and tactics also showed a great deal of insight into the Principles of War. This is understandable since he was a recognized expert on military history. He had collected and read over 500 volumes on the subject.(7:126) The following is a discussion of how well Patton adhered to these principles:

##### Objective

The objective defines what the military action intends to accomplish and normally describes the nature and scope of an operation. . . . The ultimate military objective of war is to neutralize or destroy the enemy's armed force and his will to fight.(5:2-5)

As previously discussed, Patton's actions on Sicily, at Avranches, and during the Rhineland Campaign are excellent examples of his adherence to this principle. Patton saw the objective as the destruction of the German Army and he continually planned and maneuvered to achieve this.

#### Offensive

Unless offensive action is initiated, military victory is seldom possible. The offensive enables commanders to select priorities of attack, as well as the time, place, and weaponry necessary to achieve objectives.  
(5:2-6)

Patton certainly believed in offensive operations. "L'attaque, toujours l'attaque!" (Attack, always attack!) was his doctrine.(7:6) He maintained the "offensive spirit of the troops" by conducting an "aggressive defense" even when he was held up because of logistic considerations. His offense oriented approach enabled him to crush the German First and Seventh Armies in the Rhineland Campaign.(7:236)

#### Surprise

Surprise is the attack of an enemy at a time, place, and manner for which the enemy is neither prepared nor expecting an attack. The principle of surprise is achieved when an enemy is unable to react effectively to an attack.(5:2-6)

A vivid example of Patton's employment of this principle is his counter to the German Ardennes offensive of 1944. His staff had correctly recognized and analyzed the German preparation for the Battle of the Bulge four days before the attack. Two days after it began, Patton launched an attack on the German flank

which caught the Germans unprepared and turned their offensive into a decisive defeat.(7:215-222)

#### Security

Security is taking continuous, positive measures to prevent surprise and preserve freedom of action. Security involves active and passive defensive measures and the denial of useful information to the enemy.(5:2-6)

The Battle of the Bulge also strongly supports Patton's comprehension of security. The fact he was able to prevent the Germans from surprising him is the essence of this principle. Additionally, his use of tactical air forces to protect his flank highlights his understanding of this principle.

#### Mass

Concentrated firepower can overwhelm enemy defenses and secure an objective at the right time and place. . . This requires a balance between mass and economy of force, but the paramount consideration for the commanders must always be the objective.(5:2-7)

#### Economy of Force

Concurrently, using economy of force permits a commander to execute attack with appropriate mass at the critical time and place without wasting resources on secondary objectives. War will always involve the determination of priorities.(5:2-7)

#### Maneuver

Maneuver is the movement of friendly forces in relation to enemy forces. Commanders seek to maneuver their strengths selectively against an enemy's weakness while avoiding engagements with forces of superior strength.(5:2-7)

### Timing and Tempo

Timing and tempo is the principle of executing military operations at a point in time and at a rate which optimizes the use of friendly forces and which inhibits or denies the effectiveness of enemy forces. The purpose is to dominate the action, remain unpredictable, and create uncertainty in the mind of the enemy.(5:2-8)

The blitzkrieg style warfare that Patton fought intertwined the principles of mass, economy of force, maneuver, and timing and tempo. His basis for armored forces was mass achieved by grouping tanks together in a fighting unit instead of parceling them out piecemeal as infantry support. The fact Third Army inflicted a kill ratio of 6:1 and a combat casualty ratio of 10:1 serves as a strong testament to his adherence to economy of force.(16:291) His ability to maneuver forces was highlighted at Avranches and the Ardennes when he either moved around or behind forces that were threatening other Allied efforts. The drive of Third Army through Europe that went faster and further than any army in history underscores Patton's feel for timing and tempo.(16:112)

### Unity of Command

Unity of command is the principle of vesting appropriate authority and responsibility in a single commander to effect unity of effort in carrying out an assigned task. . . it is best achieved by giving a single commander full authority.(5:2-8)

Patton was known for telling his subordinate commanders what he wanted done and then giving them the authority while holding them responsible for getting it done. His understanding

of unity of command is best demonstrated by the fact that though he often disagreed with Eisenhower, Patton continually supported his authority. This was evident during those times Patton was halted by Eisenhower's decisions on distribution of logistics. Patton did, however, threaten to resign at one point but was dissuaded by General Bradley.(7:189-206)

#### Simplicity

To achieve a unity of effort toward a common goal, guidance must be quick, clear and concise- it must have simplicity. Simplicity promotes understanding, reduces confusion, and permits ease of execution in the intense and uncertain environment of combat.  
(5:2-8)

Simplicity was the hallmark of Patton's operations. He understood a good plan executed now was better than a perfect, involved plan executed tomorrow. His plans for Sicily, the Avranches Gap and the Battle of the Bulge displayed this simplicity. Flank the enemy and maneuver to cut his lines of communication and retreat.

#### Logistics

Logistics is the principle of sustaining both man and machine in combat by obtaining, moving and maintaining warfighting potential. . . . Logistics can limit the extent of an operation or permit the attainment of objectives.(5:2-9)

The main critique of Patton in this area is that he ignored the logistic planners. Events showed that the planners overestimated requirements by 100%. Additionally, they underestimated the advancement of Patton's Army by as much as 11 days at times.(20:214-217) The evaluation of this point rests on the

fact Patton never lost a battle because of his disregard for logistics.

### Cohesion

Cohesion is the principle of establishing and maintaining the warfighting spirit and capability of a force to win. Cohesion is the cement that holds a unit together through the trials of combat and is critical to the fighting effectiveness of a force. (5:2-9)

Cohesion is another term for morale. In this area, Patton excelled. He understood the importance of morale and how to achieve it. He showed the best stimulant to high morale was success. Third Army's figures for battle exhaustion and self-inflicted wounds were almost zero.(7:183)

In summary, an analysis of Patton reveals a warrior in total accord with his environment. While he never achieved independent command, he kept the entire European theater in perspective when forming his plans and actions which were designed to achieve the unconditional surrender of Germany. Additionally, his battles reflect a high degree of comprehension of the Principles of War. General Patton was a total warrior who understood the way to marry these Principles to the technology and resources at his disposal to achieve victory.



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## APPENDIX A

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

#### BLITZKRIEG MASTERS: GUDERIAN AND PATTON

1. Question: Using the strategy process model, describe the portion or portions of it that General Heinz Guderian had the most effect on prior to and during World War II in relation to Germany.

Rationale: The major areas of the strategy process that Guderian had an effect on were in military and battlefield strategy. This can be explained by his development and employment of armored warfare. Additionally, it can be argued that as Chief of the German General Staff he impacted the Grand Strategy of Germany towards the end of World War II. The most accurate answer would address the fact that Hitler was the major developer of national objectives, grand and military strategy.

2. Question: Using the strategy process model, discuss the areas General George Patton, Jr. had the most effect on during World War II in relation to the United States.

Rationale: Patton's major impact was on the military and battlefield strategy. His employment of the Third Army in

Western Europe demonstrates his impact on battlefield strategy and in part in Operation "Torch" and the invasion of Sicily support his role in the development of military strategy. He was as close to a pure warrior as the United States has ever seen and thus had little impact on the grand strategy or national objective which was set by others.

3. Question: Explain the Principles of War that are key to the blitzkrieg warfare of General Heinz W. Guderian.

Rationale: Armored warfare as developed and employed by Guderian had its foundation in the principles of mass, economy of force, maneuver and timing and tempo. The position that offensive and surprise may also be supported by the student, but Guderian saw blitzkrieg as primarily defensive in nature.

4. Question: Explain the Principle(s) of War neglected by Patton in his employment of the Third Army during World War II.

Rationale: Logistics is the prime critique that may be leveled at Patton. The answer should address Patton's failure to plan for the logistical limits he faced. However, a complete answer would address his ability to manage an "aggressive defense" with the supplies he did have.

Note: Some answers may address the principle of security. They have neglected to give credit to Patton's use of tactical air force to protect his flanks.

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